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## ARE THERE TOO MANY HIGH-SCHOOL TEACHERS IN CALIFORNIA ?<sup>1</sup>

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### I

The question is easily asked, but not so easily answered; one can easily prejudge the case, according to preconceived notions or possible interests. Not only times and places, but types and sorts of teachers are involved; for the genus high-school teacher is by no means homogeneous. It contains several varieties, not to say some sports, in the biological sense. Anyway, who shall be the judge of the question; and by what criteria shall the decision be rendered? Speaking before this body of men and women devoted to science, I may not, if I would, assume the rôle of advocate, but must essay to examine the matter in that detached, impersonal spirit which we recognize as the glory of the truly scientific mind.

It is evident, then, at the outset, that there are two points of view from which the question should be viewed; the point of view, that is, of the individual teacher on the one hand, and that of the state, or society, on the other. We shall consider the matter first from the point of view of the individual teacher.

Now, if not for purely academic reasons, why should the individual teacher be at all interested in this question? Manifestly, because of the inseparable relation existing between the supply of teachers and his own personal and professional welfare. This relation is an economic one primarily, and is ultimately regulated, in the main, by the economic law of supply and demand. In this respect, state and teacher stand to each other in the relation of buyer and seller respectively. Too many sellers tend to depress the market—and that not alone in the mere matter of salary. The teacher's status in all its aspects, and the professional and social

<sup>1</sup> Read at the meeting of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association at Palo Alto, California, November 27, 1915.

conditions in which he lives and works, are involved. An over-supply of teachers, if sufficiently long continued, could not but affect all these relations unfavorably. Perhaps the best way to get at this will be to set down what would approximate a reasonable ideal of professional conditions for the teacher as such. In the main, they would probably be about as follows: (1) all available teachers employed, with a favorable outlook for the prompt placing of the annually maturing crop of novices; (2) salaries satisfactory, both absolutely and as compared with high-school salaries in other states, and as good, at least, as equivalent preparation might be expected to yield in other callings; (3) positions so numerous as to permit of picking and choosing; (4) place of the profession in popular and official esteem, good; (5) tenure of office reasonably secure; (6) satisfactory opportunities for advancement in salary and rank; (7) provision for a proper degree of professional independence and initiative, both in and out of school; and lastly, (8) indications that these desirable conditions are likely to be permanent.

If this be accepted as a fairly satisfactory statement of employment conditions most favorable from the point of view of the teacher, it is, nevertheless, evident that the conditions fall naturally into two classes, in which their responsiveness severally to the supply of teachers varies greatly in degree. In the one class, it is evident, close, and sensitive; in the other, the class of less purely economic conditions, it is remote, tardy, and hard to measure.

Among those in the second class should be placed especially: (5) tenure of office and (7) provision for professional independence and initiative. The latter, however desirable, is but remotely connected with our problem. The former is regulated either by legal enactment or by social custom. In the former case, once tenure has been provided for, it is little affected by the law of supply and demand; in the latter, professional freedom depends more upon the state of social intelligence and civic ideals than upon economic laws.

The limits of this paper permit consideration of only those conditions which are most closely dependent upon, and most responsive to, a supposed condition of a teacher surplus; and pre-eminently first and most important among these we find employ-

ment and salaries. For chronic non-employment and insufficient salaries, no other conditions, however favorable, can compensate; whereas on the other hand, if employment be ready and salaries good, a by no means ideal state of the other conditions is at least endurable. Consequently, we shall give our attention mainly to the conditions of employment and salaries.

Mere *statistics* of employment or non-employment are of little value here; for even if figures could be had showing just how many persons eligible to teach in the high schools, and yet not teaching, there are in the state, these figures would be well-nigh useless unless we also knew just why these eligibles are not employed—whether, that is, non-employment is due to lack of opportunities or to choice. Thus, to give but one example, there must be in California literally hundreds of women legally eligible to teach in the high schools, who have relinquished professional for family life; for, in this state, as elsewhere, marriage means for the woman teacher, as a rule, permanent retirement from public pedagogic activity.

Since, then, it is impossible to reach valuable conclusions in the case of the already eligible teachers, the next best thing will be to see how the matter stands with the neophytes—the candidates for teaching positions. With the well-nigh state-wide prejudice against the employment of wholly inexperienced teachers, we may reasonably consider the extent and promptness with which the latter are placed as a fair indication of this phase of our problem.

The University of California has for many years prepared for certification the greater part, by far, of the new high-school teachers of the state. Of such, 441 were sent out in 1914, and in May of the current year. Ninety per cent of these were readily placed. Moreover, a careful inspection of the individual cases of the unplaced ten per cent destroys what little comfort their number might seem to offer to those who are convinced that we have too many high-school teachers. For nearly three-fifths of these were unlocated because of unwise or blind choice of subjects; because, in other words, they had prepared to teach what they happened to prefer, rather than what is in demand. Thus, if a candidate, following her tastes, chooses to prepare to teach, say, anthropology or oriental languages—subjects which never have been taught in

California high schools—should her failure to find a position to teach what nobody wants taught be brought forward as evidence that there are too many teachers? This is a true and typical, though somewhat extreme, case.

The other two-fifths of the unplaced failed of positions from a variety of causes, which were scarcely the same in any two cases. In a few cases, the causes were intrinsic and unavoidable; in others, they were extrinsic, or accidental, and will not be permanent.

Information from Leland Stanford Junior University shows that conditions there are very similar to those in the University of California; and the University of Southern California, which has granted high-school certificates for the past four years, also reports conditions as practically identical with those in the University of California.

The director of the Department of Education of the University of Southern California, Professor Thomas B. Stowell, makes this significant comment: "The majority of our graduates are in the cities and large towns of southern California. We have not a sufficient supply to reach the rural districts and smaller towns of southern California." Not much evidence there of an oversupply!

As a side-light upon the general situation, it should be said that the University of California has every year dozens, if not hundreds, of requests for teachers which it cannot fill.

We come now to the matter of salaries; and here we are fortunate in having a mass of very valuable data, recently compiled by a committee of the National Education Association, and published by the United States government.<sup>1</sup>

The following quotation from the latter *Bulletin* will serve to indicate the scope and fulness of the data: "The present report, taken in conjunction with the data in *Bulletin*, 1914, No. 16, makes available actual salary figures for superintendents, high-school teachers and principals, and elementary teachers and principals, in practically all cities [in the United States] of more than 2,500 population."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> (a) "The Tangible Rewards of Teaching," *U.S. Bureau of Education Bulletin*, 1914, No. 16.

(b) "A Comparative Study of the Salaries of Teachers and School Officers," *ibid.*, 1915, No. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Cities are arranged, according to population, in seven groups. From the data given, the speaker has prepared a table which exhibits at a glance the status of high-school salaries in California, as compared with those of the whole United States. The same scheme of population groups has been followed.

TABLE I

CLASS	CALIFORNIA CITIES	POSITION	CALIFORNIA AVERAGE	UNITED STATES AVERAGE	CALIFORNIA PERCENTAGE OF ADVANTAGE
I. Population over 250,000	San Francisco	Principals . . . . .	3,060	3,565	-14
		Vice-principals . . . . .	2,100	2,164	- 3
		Heads of departments . . . . .	2,040	1,951	+ 4.5
		Teachers . . . . .	1,666	1,746	- 4.6
II. Population 100,000 to 250,000	Oakland	Principals . . . . .	3,100	2,772	+12
		Vice-principals . . . . .	2,000	1,923	+ 4
		Heads of departments . . . . .		1,541	
		Teachers . . . . .	1,507	1,216	+24
III. Population 50,000 to 100,000	No representatives	Principals . . . . .		2,477	
		Vice-principals . . . . .		1,734	
		Heads of departments . . . . .		1,469	
		Teachers . . . . .		1,069	
IV. Population 25,000 to 50,000	Berkeley Pasadena Sacramento San Diego *San Jose	Principals . . . . .	3,060	2,150	+42
		Vice-principals . . . . .	2,025	1,378	+48
		Heads of departments . . . . .	1,733	1,417	+22
		Teachers . . . . .	1,457	1,009	+44
V. Population 10,000 to 25,000	Alameda Eureka Fresno Long Beach Pomona Redlands San Bernardino Santa Barbara Santa Cruz	Principals . . . . .	2,312	1,673	+38
		Vice-principals . . . . .	1,755	1,287	+36
		Heads of departments . . . . .	1,527	1,104	+38
		Teachers . . . . .	1,200	897	+34
VI. Population 5,000 to 10,000	Alhambra Marysville San Rafael Santa Ana	Principals . . . . .	2,025	1,314	+54
		Heads of departments . . . . .	1,460	974	+50
		Teachers . . . . .	1,234	795	+54
VII. Population 2,500 to 5,000†	Fifteen towns; 171 teachers and principals	Principals . . . . .	2,154	1,222	+76
		Teachers . . . . .	1,264	775	+63

\* Principals and vice-principals only.

† In Class VII, the *Bulletin* does not give averages; so all California towns of this class have been compared with ninety-two of the largest of the other towns of the class.

An examination of this table brings out some interesting and even remarkable facts. We find, for example, that salaries in California high schools are above the average for cities of their own class in the whole United States in all but Class I, of which San Francisco is the only California representative; also that, with

one exception, California's percentage of advantage grows larger with each succeeding class. Thus, in Class II, California teachers' salaries are 24 per cent above the general average, while in Class VII they are 63 per cent above. In the case of principals, the difference is still greater; for, beginning with 12 per cent of advantage in Class II, it reaches 76 per cent in Class VII. Or, to put the matter in another way, teachers in the smallest listed towns in California are paid salaries which are 63 per cent better than those paid teachers of their own class, VII, in other states; 58 per cent better than those paid teachers of the next larger class, VI, in other states; 41 per cent better than those paid teachers of the next larger class, V, in other states; 25 per cent better than those paid teachers of the next larger class, IV, in other states; 18 per cent better than those paid teachers of the next larger class, III, in other states; 4 per cent better than those paid teachers of the next larger class, II, in other states.

That is, stated still otherwise, teachers in little California rural villages of 2,500 population receive salaries which are about two-thirds larger than those paid in towns of like size in the rest of the United States, and which are equaled only by the salaries paid in the very largest cities of the Union.

But why go on? Does anyone here think that in this showing we have symptoms of an oversupply of high-school teachers?

Interesting as it would be to do so, time does not permit us to consider here the other possible evidences of a surplus; and we must now pass to consider the question for a little while from the point of view of society.

## II

Perhaps the best way to get at this will be to suppose a crowded condition of certain other professions and note what harmful social conditions would probably result.

Thus, for example, if there were a tendency to a chronic oversupply of doctors, the tangible rewards of the medical profession would inevitably be low; the profession itself would fall in social esteem; hence, a less able type of recruits would be attracted to it; and, as a final result, public health and physical welfare would conceivably suffer.

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Like conditions would result in the case of a similar oversupply of lawyers, except that this would probably have still more sinister social effects, because of the greater and more numerous opportunities which are offered the ill-disposed of the legal profession for preying upon society.

The ministerial profession would show similar stages of deterioration, under such conditions; and the final results would be that religion and its spiritual offices would fall in popular esteem; and public and private morals, in so far as these are based upon religious sanctions, might be expected to deteriorate accordingly. Of course, all these final conditions of ill might, conceivably, follow in some measure from other causes; but we are interested in them here only in so far as they would undoubtedly result from overcrowding of the professions in question.

With the present prevailing ideals of the responsibility of society for the specific welfare of its individual members, I am not able to see that society could have any concern, other than that relating to the good of the service, as to whether these professions are crowded or not. Certain European countries, it is true, do seek to limit the number of persons preparing for the learned professions, teaching included, because of the menace which the presence of a relatively large number of struggling professionals—*Hungerkandidaten*—is supposed to offer to the existing social order. Such reasons, however, could hardly get a hearing in this country at present.

Now, should the state be concerned about an oversupply of high-school teachers for reasons different from those which we found would prevail in the case of the other professions? Many persons think it should. Indeed, many members of the teaching profession itself seem to have a belief that they deserve some special consideration at the hands of society, because of the peculiarly lofty character of the teacher's calling.

This estimate of the super-value of the teaching profession is due, however, I believe, mainly to the fact that for untold ages of human history the offices of priest and teacher were combined in one and the same person—a state of affairs of which society still exhibits numerous other vestigial characteristics. Thus, it is



doubtless due to this long and intimate association of teaching with the spiritual office that most earnest young teachers even today seem to have a sort of dim, subconscious conviction that members of the teaching profession as such exhale a faint but still perceptible odor of reflected sanctity.

Moreover, because of this same historic association, many a young teacher, or would-be-teacher, honestly thinks that the voice which he has heard summoning him to a life of service is a higher and holier one than is the voice which summons his brother to his life-work as doctor, engineer, or business man.

To resume, the conclusion to which we are led is that, in respect of public consideration, high-school teaching stands or should stand on a like footing with other professions, and that society is interested in a surplus of high-school teachers only in so far as overcrowding may threaten the quality of the public service. For, if the spiritual quality above referred to as a popularly supposed characteristic peculiar to the teaching profession is intrinsic and real, and not, as I have assumed, a reflected quality, society will take it for granted and demand it as a characteristic of the expected service.

One of the chief problems of current industrial and social life is how to eliminate unnecessary waste and so get the largest returns in service for the energy expended. We should not conceive of this principle as applying to private affairs only. For, just as it is right and proper for the individual to seek to get the largest returns for his expenditure of effort, consistent with the rights of others, so society, it seems to me, should be equally interested in the same problem. If, in the words of our Chief Executive, "All waste is wicked," it is incumbent on us all to see to it that society gets the service for which it pays.

If now, for the argument's sake, at least, these propositions be granted, let us see whether we can discover signs of a threatened deterioration in the California high-school service, as a result of an oversupply of high-school teachers.

Direct and conclusive evidence of the ultimate fact is hard to get, for here all available standards of measurement are both relative and subjective. For this occasion, the best we can do is to

note whether the *preliminary* signs of the coming decadence, which we posited in the supposed cases, are in evidence.

Are the material rewards of high-school teaching in California low and lowering?

In the first part of this paper attention was called to the fact that high-school salaries in California are the highest in the Union; that they are from 25 to 75 per cent better than the average salaries in other states. Nor do they show any signs of falling off; on the contrary, they have risen markedly in the past five to ten years, and more rapidly than the cost of living has advanced in the same time. Indeed, it is a pleasure to report that the high-school teachers exhibit abundant evidences of general prosperity—not the least noticeable of which are the automobiles possessed by many of them, not to mention other more stable forms of property.

Neither are there any visible signs that high-school teaching and high-school interests generally are falling in popular esteem. On the contrary, there can be no question that both are distinctly gaining. Time was—and not so very long ago either—when one might have felt like apologizing for being a teacher; today, one is as likely to be proud of the fact that he is a high-school teacher. One of the surest signs of the interest and faith of the public in high schools is to be found in the willingness with which they are supported. Even with his long and intimate acquaintance with the high schools of the state, the writer has never ceased to admire and wonder at the well-nigh unfailing liberality—a liberality that verges at times upon extravagance—with which California supports its high schools. Time does not permit the giving of details. But the per capita cost of educating the high-school pupil has been rising annually for years. Palatial buildings, excellent equipment, numerous and varied courses, more and better-paid teachers, all and everywhere attest the state's unfailing—nay, increasing—interest and faith in her high schools. So great is this faith, so prompt and liberal the state's response, that one is forced to wonder at times whether other educational interests are not being sacrificed, whether this boundless faith can be wholly justified.

Is a less able type of recruits being drawn into high-school teaching? Again, it is a pleasure to be able to declare that the

average quality of applicants for the certificate, from both within and without the state, shows no tendency to fall off from the high standards it has hitherto maintained. It is especially noticeable that we are getting, in recent years, a larger proportion of young men; and this, so long as the sexes are not about evenly balanced in numbers, will be a sign of increasing strength.

So we see that all our preliminary signs of coming decadence are conspicuous only for their absence; and perhaps you will take my word for it when I declare that the actual work of the schools likewise shows no signs of suffering from the cause under consideration. It would be decidedly easier to show, on the contrary, that the service is actually suffering today from a shortage of teachers in some phases of the work, rather than from an oversupply in any. One evidence of this, among several, is in the large number of special certificates that have been issued in recent years. But all that "is another story."

We seem led to the following general conclusions: There is no oversupply of high-school teachers in the state; there is rather a shortage in some lines; there is some lack of individual adjustment which at times causes personal hardship. We need some concerted and state-wide plan by which candidates can be early informed of the present and probable needs of the state in this matter, so that they may choose wisely. Then, too, the higher educational institutions which are charged with the preparation of high-school teachers need to realize that they are falling short of their duty in not making more serious attempts to train the types of teachers of which there is always a shortage in the state. By doing so, they would render both state and individual a far truer service than they now do by confining their efforts so exclusively to purely traditional and mostly scholastic lines.